

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Space Capacity Committee**
Friday, April 27th, 2012
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400 – Chicago
2800 Montvale Drive – Springfield

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present (Chicago): Kim Collins, Craig Duetsch (phone), Angela Farwig (staffer), Mario Garcia, Ireta Gasner, Kate Maher, Mark McHugh (co-chair), Christine Robinson (representing Samir Tanna) (phone), Bonnie Roelle, Kelley Talbot, Dawn Thomas, Martin Torres (co-chair), Loukisha Smart-Pennix (phone), Cindy Wall (representing Holly Knicker) (phone), Greg Will (phone), Cindy Zumwalt (phone)

Members Absent: Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, Bernard Cesarone, Shannon Christian, Rebecca Deang, Lauri Frichtl, Refugio Gonzales, Mary Griffith, Nakisha Hobbs, Amber Kirchhoff, Kellie Magnuson, Giacomo Mancuso, Hilary Morreale, Carol Morris, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Sessy Nyman, Tracy Ocomy, Sylvia Puente, Tony Raden, Cathy Reed

Guests: Dawit Hadgu (CPS)

Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm. Martin Torres welcomed committee members and members introduced themselves. The committee reviewed and approved the January 27, 2012 meeting minutes with no edits or changes.

Early Childhood Construction Grant Program Update – State

Martin Torres provided an update on the status of Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) program awards. The process has taken longer than anticipated as applications varied widely from one another, but determinations will be made this calendar year. This project is important to the governor's office, and they are committed to making it a success. The applications are under final review to ensure that the program is administered with integrity and that only proposals that can be successfully implemented are funded. The review process continues to be a joint venture with the governor's office, the Capital Development Board and other state partners.

Committee members raised concerns that the current budget climate was contributing to the delay in distributing ECCG funds. ECCG funds are not dependent on the current budget and the full \$45 million is available for the ECCG program.

The committee then reviewed a memo containing its data requests to the governor's office regarding the ECCG applications. The governor's office had informed the staffer that the provision of some of the requested data would enable the committee to determine the identity of particular applicants. Therefore, some of the data that the committee requested cannot be provided at this time.

There are two data requests that do not appear to raise these concerns. The first is Data Request 3: number of school-based vs. community-based applicants. However, this request would require a labor-intensive review as this information is not clear from the face of the applications and would be difficult to pull together.

Data Request 4 asks for the municipalities and Chicago community areas in the 25 highest-ranked municipalities/community areas as determined by the IECAM ranking of community need that did not apply for ECCG funding. The following information regarding these requests was provided to the committee:

- At least one organization from 23 of the top 25 high-need municipalities as determined by the IECAM rankings submitted an application. Two of the top 25 did not apply.
- At least one organization from 20 of the top 25 high-need Chicago community areas as determined by the IECAM rankings submitted an application. Five of the top 25 did not apply.

It was noted that some of the other data requests submitted by the committee may be too extensive for the governor's office to provide responses to in a timely manner. It was suggested that the committee revise some of its data requests to focus on the areas with the highest need as determined by the IECAM rankings.

Next step: Staffer will work with the governor's office to revise data requests to focus on high need areas as determined by the IECAM rankings.

Early Childhood Construction Grant Program Update – Chicago

Mark McHugh updated the committee on the Chicago set-aside of the Early Childhood Construction Grant program. The \$9 million in ECCG funds allocated to CPS will be released to CPS at the same time the funds for the statewide competition are released. The clock to spend the funds does not start until contracts have been signed.

Following the committee's last meeting, the co-chairs communicated the committee's suggestions to CPS regarding partnering with the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) in the administration of the Request for Applications (RFA) to community-based organizations for ECCG funds. CPS Facilities staff engaged in initial conversations with DFSS regarding collaboration on the RFA and communicated that information to CPS Early Childhood Education staff for inclusion in the RFA process. It is unclear at this time which, if any, of the committee's suggestions have been adopted by CPS. The governor's office also provided CPS with feedback on its experience with the statewide ECCG to help improve the CPS RFA. The RFA is currently in CPS' legal department undergoing review.

During the meeting, CPS asked for more information regarding the IFF technical assistance webinar for applicants to the statewide ECCG program. The webinar was provided after the statewide RFA was released. It was extremely popular, with over 200 participants. It was suggested that IFF and DFSS partner with CPS in facilitating a technical assistance webinar for organizations interested in applying for Chicago ECCG funding. Another idea to explore is hosting an in-person technical assistance seminar as interested participants would all be located in the Chicago area.

Next, the committee discussed the City of Chicago competitive RFP for early childhood programs. This is a joint venture between the City of Chicago, CPS, and DFSS to put out a competitive RFP for early childhood programs for FY13-FY14. All CPS Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative programs and all city-funded Head Start/Early Head Start programs will be applying. The committee wants to ensure that the administration of the CPS ECCG RFA to community-based organizations for facilities is coordinated with the competitive RFP.

Several members of the Space Capacity Committee are participating on the committee working on the citywide competitive RFP. Theresa Hawley is the consultant managing the project. It is a slow process as they are working to be transparent and ensure that all stakeholders are on board. The plan is for the competitive RFP to be released in July.

The ECCG program has not as of yet been a part of the discussion regarding the city's competitive RFP process. However, the mayor's task force on early childhood education has prioritized quality, and Chapin Hall is gathering citywide data on quality, location, and need. It was noted that we need to "connect the dots" between the two programs. Therefore, the committee co-chairs will reach out to the consultant on the city competitive RFP process to begin the conversation on aligning and coordinating that process with the CPS ECCG program.

Next step:

- Staffer will set up a call for the committee co-chairs with Theresa Hawley.

ISBE and DHS Funding for ECCG Slots

There is concern about how funding for the slots that will be created by successful ECCG applicants will be addressed. There are significant pressures on the state budget, including Medicaid, pensions and debt. While the governor proposed an increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), it does not appear that the General Assembly will pass a significant increase. The Department of Human Services is faced with severe budget and operational cuts, including increased co-payments and lowered eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program.

The committee co-chairs had preliminary discussions with both ISBE and DHS on this issue. At the meeting, ISBE indicated that it would consider whether a program was a current or past recipient of funding in making funding decisions. ISBE is also looking at the possibility of factoring receipt of ECCG funds into that decision-making.

The FY13 budget will be finalized soon.

SAC Grant

While the original intent of the Facilities SAC grant funds was not realized, the ECCG program nonetheless received a large number of applications. The governor's office has now amended its application for the SAC grant and is waiting for approval. Bidding is not an option at this point for the SAC grant.

The amended proposal provides for the funds to be allocated in two ways:

- Additional funding to the Quality Counts Child Care (QCCC) grants funded through DHS, which would be targeted to high need areas as identified by the IECAM rankings.
- A small portion for technical assistance to successful ECCG applicants.

The QCCC program has been around since 2003. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies distribute these funds and have a lot of experience working with the various agencies. A copy of the FY12 QCCC Grant Instructions was distributed to the committee to provide some background on the program. About \$250,000 of the grant will be allocated to the QCCC program, while about \$10,000 will go technical assistance.

It is anticipated that these funds will be distributed in FY13. The SAC grant funds are not supplanting DHS funds for the QCCC program. The intent is to target these funds to high need areas as identified in the IECAM rankings. CCR&Rs each serve several counties, so some sort of averaging of the IECAM ranking of areas served by each CCR&R will be conducted to determine the funds that will be allocated to each one for distribution through the QCCC program. Addressing a concern of the committee, the governor's office indicated that helping providers move up in the QRIS is a consideration in the QCCC program.

It was noted that quality improvements other than facility improvements are included in the QCCC program. The committee expressed that SAC grant facilities funds should be used to aid programs in making facilities improvements through the QCCC program. The governor's office is open to targeting these funds to facilities improvements.

Next steps:

- The committee and the governor's office will continue to communicate on the administration of the SAC grant.
- The governor's office will share some data on QCCC applications so the committee can understand how programs use these funds.

ELC Transition and Future Opportunities

The Early Learning Council (ELC) has developed a new structure that goes into effect July 1. Committee members reviewed a handout that summarizes the new ELC committee structure. Under this new structure, the work of the Space Capacity Committee will be under the Family and Community Engagement Committee. The co-chairs of this new committee are George Davis and Maria Whelan, and the government liaison is Daniel Fitzgerald from DCFS.

A copy of the Space Capacity Committee Work Plan was distributed to committee members. The committee co-chairs recognized the hard work of the committee in accomplishing the work it set out to do, including:

- Being the first in the nation to secure an early childhood construction grant in the state capital budget;
- Working with experts and stakeholders to develop data measures to identify and prioritize underserved communities to be served by the ECCG program; and
- Partnering with the governor's office and IFF to provide technical assistance to assist organizations interested in applying for ECCG funds.

Although this likely will be the last committee meeting, providing space for high-quality early childhood programs remains a priority in Illinois. The committee co-chairs requested that committee members who are interested in the space capacity work and are committed to being actively involved in it confirm their interest in remaining involved. However, all meetings of the ELC are open meetings and anyone can attend.

Finally, the governor's office provided the names of the co-chairs and government representative for each of the other new ELC committees as follows:

- Home Visiting Task Force: Diana Rauner, Gaylord Gieske and Teresa Kelly (Governor's office)
- Program Standards and Quality: Jan Maruna, Jeanna Capito and Linda Saterfield (DHS)
- System Integration and Alignment: Karen Berman, Vanessa Rich and Reyna Hernandez (ISBE)
- Data, Research and Evaluation: Elliot Regenstein, Teri Talan and Dan Harris (DHS)

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.